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Boobs or Bitches: The Way the Internet Portrays Women

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Boobs or Bitches: The Way the Internet Portrays Women

Posted on **December 1, 2009** by **Editor**



By **Valerie Horres**

As an increasingly integral and influential part of international culture, it is only natural that the Internet affects the portrayal of men and women. While the general trend of global mores appears to be toward gender equity, in many ways Internet content proves to characterize women as one of two things: boobs or bitches.

Part of this negative portrayal of women occurs because of how the different sexes utilize the Internet. Traditional gender roles influence the use of the web by men and women. For example, females are more likely than males to utilize the net to research health information [1]. Customarily, as mothers put themselves in charge of the well-being of household members, this makes sense.

Women are also more likely than men to search for spiritual and religious information, and to participate in support groups [2]. There are hundreds of support groups online aimed singly at women. Some sites, such as <http://www.dmoz.org/> [3], can be utilized to locate many of these online support groups. These groups specialize in topics like health, divorce, religion, pregnancy, motherhood, menopause, and many others [4].

Males, on the other hand, employ the Internet to read news, add content to the web, deal in finances, and find entertainment at a higher rate than females [5]. Instead of the stereotypic patriarch reading the newspaper at the breakfast table, or trading stocks and bonds from his study, men are now doing these acts online.

However, it is the area of online entertainment that tends to propagate the degradation of women. Some activities, such as making travel plans and participating in online auctions, do not portray women in a negative light. Nevertheless, other modes of amusement affect society by promoting demeaning interpretations of women. These activities extend from checking sports

scores and viewing games, listening to and downloading music, and streaming television shows, to viewing online pornography.

The media sources listed above lean toward depicting women as bitches or sexual objects. For example, business women on streamed television shows are often characterized with a Hilary Clinton-esque stigma of trying to do a man's job or being emotionless bitches [6].

Media sources also show scantily clad cheerleaders—such as those found on <http://twitter.com/twiCheerleaders> [7]—dancers, singers, actors, and contain offensive characterizations and lyrics. A prime example of a song degrading women is iBitches Aint Shit by Dr. Dre [8].

Another sort of entertainment that more male online users engage in than females is video games. Analysis of these games reveals there are no female characters in 41% of the games with characters. In 28% of these, women were portrayed as sex objects and 21% depicted violence directed at women [9]. The virtual gaming world contains few female characters, often depicts females as sex toys, and/or females as a target for abuse. One such game over 2.5 million people play is Castle Age, a role playing game on Facebook, where many of the characters are nearly naked females [10].

One additional online activity that men entertain themselves with more than women do is the viewing of online pornography [11]. Whether videos, pictures, cartoons, or text, a great deal of pornography presents females negatively. Women often appear as mere sex toys, normally willing to engage in any act and suffer many abuses for the purpose of arousing the viewer. Furthermore, if the pornography depicts a female refusing to participate in a sexual act, she is called names, or even forced into participating against her will, which again, the viewer is supposed to get off on and enjoy.

Online pornography is more widespread than some might think. Wordtracker.com supplies reports on the top 200 long-term search phrases—those that reappear through the weeks, months, and years—and the top 200 short-term search phrases—phrases that appear within a one day period—that are put into its database. 42% of both long and short-term search phrases are direct searches on porn sites, searches for women celebrities known for their sexual appeal, phrases whose top hits are pornography, such as “girls showering,” and phrases that relate to women in a sexual fashion, such as “boobs” [12].

An article in the *Psychology of Women Quarterly* reported that in the 1980s all “X-rated materials in the U.S. represented ‘... an estimated \$8 billion industry of misogyny per year’ (Cowan, Lee, Levy, & Synder, 1988, pp. 309-310) and the U.S. Attorney General's Commission reported that violent pornography was ‘[...] the most prevalent form’ of sexually explicit material” [13]. 30 years later the numbers have risen. In 2006, the Internet pornography industry made over \$2.84 billion, and total the porn industry made \$13.33 billion [14]. More Internet pornography increases the amount of online materials which debase females.

Not only are women depicted in a poor light on the Internet, but when women protest against these negative portrayals, they are often ridiculed and picked on. A woman online who “speaks out steadfastly and strongly against [...] pornography, prostitution, who writes as a feminist or as a human rights advocate, can expect to be harassed and attacked [...] not only for her specific views and perspective, but in ways that are distinctly sexist” [15]. It is not the ideas that are assaulted, but rather an attack on the female writer's appearance. She will be described as a man-hater, her writings, activism and life's work will be dismissed and trivialized, she will be called shrill and strident, or she will be threatened in ways that are sexual [16].

The Internet affords anyone the opportunity to metaphorically stand on a soapbox and express opinions in any way they desire. In the United States, these reactions, even if they are violent and homonym harassments toward a writer, the responses (remember men are the ones most likely to add content to the web [5]) are “understood to be matters of someone's ‘freedom of speech,’ while [female writers'] objections and our outcries [against the debasement of women], are called ‘censorship’ by some. And yet it is this freedom of speech of some that ultimately silences us and robs us of our own freedom of speech” [17].

It ultimately does not appear to be the Internet itself that degrades women, rather the content of the various media associated with it. The Internet simply is a convenient source to access a large amount of the degrading material, and provide it to the large audiences that access the Internet.

In the United States, 93% of children are online [18]. The culture of the upcoming era is set by the youth. As the adage goes: children are the future. They are blogging, instant messaging, social networking, streaming and downloading music and television, and playing online games [19]. Teenagers and young adults are the majority who are bombarded with the Internet content which sometimes degrades women. Because this new generation is influenced to regard females in such a manner and also sets the tone for the future, the general trend towards gender equity could be reversed.

Endnotes

[1] “Different People Use the Internet in Different Ways,” Infoplease, accessed 28 Oct. 2009, <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0931238.html>.

[2] Ibid.

[3] “Open Directory Project,” dmoz, accessed 28 Nov. 2009, http://www.dmoz.org/Health/Women's_Health/Support_Groups/.

[4] Online women support groups, Google search, accessed 28 Nov. 2009, <http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&source=hp&q=online+women+support+groups&aq=0&oq=online+women+sup&aqi=g1>.

[5] “Different People Use the Internet in Different Ways,” Infoplease, accessed 28 Oct. 2009,

<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0931238.html>.

[6] Joanne Lipman, "The Mismeasure of Woman," *The New York Times*, accessed 25 Oct. 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/24/opinion/24lipman.html?pagewanted=1&r=1&em>.

[7] "TwiCheerleaders," Twitter, accessed 28 Nov. 2009, <http://twitter.com/twiCheerleaders>.

[8] Dr. Dre, "Bitches Ain't Shit," *The Chronic*, 1992.

[9] Tracy L. Dietz, "An Examination of Violence and Gender Role Portrayals in Video Games: Implications for Gender Socialization and Aggressive Behavior," *Women and Language* 23.2 (2000): 64, UeAcademic OneFile, accessed 4 Nov. 2009, <http://find.galegroup.com>.

[10] Castle Age, Facebook, accessed 28 Nov. 2009, <http://www.facebook.com/apps/application.php?id=46755028429&ref=search&sid=1595268849.2015195435..1>.

[11] William A. Fisher and Azy Barak, "Internet Pornography: A Social Psychological Perspective on Internet Sexuality," *Journal of Sex Research* 38, no. 4 (2001): 315, accessed 4 Nov. 2009, <http://web.ebscohost.com>.

[12] "Top 1000 Search Phrases," Wordtracker.com, accessed 28 Oct. 2009, <http://www.wordtracker.com/database>.

[13] William A. Fisher and Azy Barak, "Internet Pornography: A Social Psychological Perspective on Internet Sexuality," *Journal of Sex Research* 38, no. 4 (2001): 313, accessed 4 Nov. 2009, <http://web.ebscohost.com>.

[14] Jerry Ropelato, "Internet Pornography Statistics," TopTenReviews, accessed 28 Nov. 2009, <http://internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com/internet-pornography-statistics.html>.

[15] Cheryl Lindsey Seelhoff, "A Chilling Effect: The Oppression and Silencing of Women Journalists and Bloggers Worldwide," *Off Our Backs* 37, no 1 (2007) 18, accessed 4 Nov. 2009, <http://web.ebscohost.com>.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid, 20.

[18] "Generational Differences in Online Activities," Pew Internet, PEW Internet & American Life Project, <http://www.pewinternet.org>.

[19] Ibid.

This entry was posted in Uncategorized by **Editor**. Bookmark the **permalink** [<http://bcis.pacificu.edu/interface/?p=3715>] .

41 THOUGHTS ON "BOOBS OR BITCHES: THE WAY THE INTERNET PORTRAYS WOMEN"

Editor

on **December 1, 2009 at 6:42 PM** said:

Poster Name: Aileen

Message: Great article! I love the title, too. 😊

Editor

on **December 1, 2009 at 6:42 PM** said:

Poster Name: Kathy Horres

Message: This is a well written article with lots of great references and quotes. I was interested to see some of the findings, some of them surprising, some not. It is good to see this type of research being published.

Editor

on **December 1, 2009 at 6:44 PM** said:

Poster Name: Amadea

Message: Interesting. I don't know if 'sex toy' is always the right word, but I understood what you were saying and I think it's true. Think about all the busty video game women out there!

Editor

on **December 1, 2009 at 6:47 PM** said:

Message: Wow. This was definitely well-researched and thought out. I didn't realize the statistics were so high! I agree with Kathy: it's good to see research like this getting more exposure!

Editor

on **December 1, 2009 at 6:47 PM** said:

Poster Name: Erin

Message: The title makes me think of the traditional female dichotomy—the virgin or the whore (or as “Mad Men” put it: Are you a Jackie or a Marilyn?) Seems like the internet has replaced the idea of the frigid virgin with the idea frigid bitch. Interesting research.

Editor

on **December 1, 2009 at 6:48 PM** said:

Poster Name: Margo

Message: Nice job on an interesting and sad article, I’m not sure what can be done about the issue discussed. As you said, ultimately it’s not the internet creating the trend of degrading/trivializing women, but rather channelling the sentiments of the culture(s) using it. And at the risk of ranting, it’s hard to expect better than this from a society who condones strip clubs under “free speech” and uses sex to sell cars/soda/jeans. And as far as trivialization goes, I still can’t believe whatever Mrs. Obama wears makes front page news on Yahoo! I find it incredibly insulting that while the First Lady is out speaking at schools and volunteering at charities, its critiques of her taste in fashion that make headlines. In my opinion that perfectly demonstrates the trend of trivializing women.

Editor

on **December 1, 2009 at 6:49 PM** said:

Poster Name: Katherine

Message: This is a very thought-provoking article. I appreciate that it has been put in there for the world. There is very solid research behind your arguments and it is well-written, like others have said. It’s very scary to think that our trend of equality could change significantly because of our popular media, particularly with our easy access to the Internet. Side-note, I hadn’t thought before about the different ways men and women use the Internet.

Editor

on **December 1, 2009 at 6:50 PM** said:

Poster Name: JimCool

Message: Man, I totally agree with you on that. There's way too many suckers out there that can't just get it. In fact, I was arguing with my best friend demetrius yesterday about this, and they wouldn't believe me that he was wrong. Now I can just show them your blog 😊

Belstaff Delta Force

on **January 29, 2014 at 5:15 PM** said:

Somebody necessarily help to make critically posts I'd state. This is the first time I frequented your website page and so far? I surprised with the research you made to create this actual submit incredible. Great activity!

Zapatillas Baratas Nike

on **January 29, 2014 at 5:19 PM** said:

Its like you learn my thoughts! You seem to understand a lot approximately this, such as you wrote the book in it or something. I believe that you simply can do with some percent to power the message house a little bit, but other than that, this is magnificent blog. A fantastic read. I will certainly be back.

Zapatillas Nike Outlet

on **January 29, 2014 at 5:29 PM** said:

Its such as you read my mind! You appear to know a lot approximately this, like you wrote the guide in it or something. I feel that you simply can do with some percent to drive the message home a bit, but other than that, this is excellent blog. A fantastic read. I will definitely be back.

Calvin Klein Boxer Shorts

on **January 29, 2014 at 6:01 PM** said:

Woah this blog is excellent i like studying your posts. Keep up the great work! You know, a lot of persons are hunting round for this info, you could aid them greatly.

Timberland Zapato

on **January 29, 2014 at 6:04 PM** said:

Thanks for every other informative web site. Where else may just I am getting that kind of information written in such a perfect method? I have a project that I am just now operating on, and I have been on the glance out for such info.

canada freebies and coupon codes

on **January 30, 2014 at 1:23 AM** said:

My spouse and I stumbled over here from a different web page and thought I might check things out. I like what I see so now i'm following you. Look forward to looking at your web page repeatedly.

zapatillas Nike Air Max 90

on **January 30, 2014 at 4:25 AM** said:

Pretty nice post. I just stumbled upon your blog and wanted to mention that I have really loved browsing your weblog posts. In any case I'll be subscribing for your rss feed and I'm hoping you write again soon!

Bolsas Gucci

on **January 30, 2014 at 4:29 AM** said:

I take pleasure in, result in I found exactly what I was taking a look for. You've ended my four day lengthy hunt! God Bless you man. Have a great day. Bye

botas polo Ralph Lauren

on **January 30, 2014 at 4:40 AM** said:

I think this is among the most important information for me. And i'm happy reading your article. However wanna statement on some common things, The web site taste is wonderful, the articles is really nice : D. Good process, cheers

Christianlouboutin

on **January 30, 2014 at 7:28 AM** said:

I'm no longer certain the place you're getting your info, but good topic. I needs to spend a while finding out more or working out more. Thank you for great info I used to be on the lookout for this info for my mission.

Nike Air Max 87

on **January 30, 2014 at 8:46 AM** said:

Thank you for some other informative website. Where else may I get that kind of info written in such an ideal method? I've a venture that I'm just now running on, and I have been on the look out for such info.

Calvin Klein Underwear Barato

on **January 30, 2014 at 8:49 AM** said:

Magnificent goods from you, man. I have take into account your stuff previous to and you're simply extremely excellent. I really like what you have received here, certainly like

what you are saying and the way in which by which you assert it. You make it enjoyable and you continue to take care of to stay it smart. I can't wait to learn much more from you. This is really a wonderful web site.

Comprar Boxer Calvin Klein

on **January 30, 2014 at 9:02 AM** said:

Terrific paintings! That is the type of info that are meant to be shared around the net. Disgrace on Google for now not positioning this publish upper! Come on over and discuss with my site . Thank you =)

breaking news

on **January 30, 2014 at 1:56 PM** said:

Thank you for sharing excellent information. Your web site is very cool. I am impressed by the data that you have on this site. It reveals how nicely you realize this subject. Bookmarked this web site page, will occur back for more articles.

Sherita Cooch

on **January 30, 2014 at 6:13 PM** said:

Hi, Neat post. There's a problem with your website in web explorer, might check this

Vendo Botas Timberland

on **January 30, 2014 at 8:20 PM** said:

hello there and thanks in your info ? I've definitely picked up something new from right here. I did then again experience a few technical points using this website, as I experienced to reload the website a lot of instances prior to I could get it to load correctly. I have been considering if your web hosting is OK? Now not that I am complaining, but sluggish loading cases instances will sometimes have an effect on your

placement in google and can damage your high quality ranking if ads and marketing with Adwords. Anyway I am including this RSS to my e-mail and could glance out for a lot extra of your respective interesting content. Make sure you update this once more very soon..

Isabel Marant Boots

on **January 30, 2014 at 11:12 PM** said:

I do agree with all the ideas you have introduced for your post. They are really convincing and can certainly work. Still, the posts are very quick for beginners. Could you please extend them a bit from subsequent time? Thank you for the post.

Polo Ralph Lauren Baratos

on **January 31, 2014 at 12:48 AM** said:

It's really a nice and useful piece of information. I am happy that you shared this helpful info with us. Please keep us informed like this. Thank you for sharing.

Zapatos Timberland

on **January 31, 2014 at 1:06 AM** said:

Wonderful points altogether, you simply received a new reader. What could you suggest about your submit that you simply made some days in the past? Any positive?

Louboutin Shoes Cheap

on **January 31, 2014 at 11:34 AM** said:

Usually I do not read post on blogs, but I would like to say that this write-up very pressured me to check out and do so! Your writing style has been surprised me. Thank you, quite great article.

plotka

on **February 1, 2014 at 1:56 AM** said:

Hello, you utilized to write great articles, but the last many articles have been kinda boring... I miss your very good articles. Past many articles are just a modest out of track!

Poznan

on **February 1, 2014 at 3:52 AM** said:

Great post! I'm going to obtain to verify these all out! I have seen bits in the a single Scorsese film on a Stones.

Ropa Interior Calvin Klein

on **February 1, 2014 at 4:55 AM** said:

Great post, very informative. I'm wondering why the other experts of this sector don't understand this. You should proceed your writing. I am sure, you've a huge readers' base already!|What's Going down i'm new to this, I stumbled upon this I've found It absolutely helpful and it has aided me out loads. I hope to give a contribution & assist different customers like its helped me. Good job.

Louis Vuitton España Online

on **February 2, 2014 at 8:32 PM** said:

It's actually a great and useful piece of information. I'm happy that you just shared this helpful information with us. Please stay us informed like this. Thank you for sharing.

nigeria

on **February 3, 2014 at 1:52 AM** said:

We are a group of volunteers and beginning a new scheme in our community. Your website provided us with valuable details to paintings on. You've performed an impressive work and our entire neighborhood can be thankful to you.

Christian Louboutin Outlet UK

on **February 4, 2014 at 9:10 AM** said:

Whats up very cool site!! Man .. Excellent .. Amazing .. I'll bookmark your blog and take the feeds also?I am satisfied to find numerous useful info here within the publish, we want work out more techniques on this regard, thank you for sharing.

community

on **February 4, 2014 at 10:20 AM** said:

I am a student and i discovered your data over a internet site really intriguing for my study, Please retain it up.

nigeria entertainment news

on **February 4, 2014 at 10:31 AM** said:

Bravo, what phrase..., a magnificent idea.

nigeria entertainment news

on **February 4, 2014 at 10:42 AM** said:

Thanks much for providing people with this sort of a remarkable opportunity to read crucial reviews from here. It is usually so superb plus packed using a great deal of fun for me personally and my office peers to visit your site minimum Three times each week to understand the new issues you have. And indeed, I'm also truly satisfied as part of your astonishing tips served by you. Some 2 details in this posting are entirely the simplest we've ever had.

Nike Air Max 87

on **February 6, 2014 at 2:42 AM** said:

Heya i am for the first time here. I came across this board and I in finding It truly useful & it helped me out much. I hope to offer one thing back and aid others such as you helped me.

nike free sale

on **February 6, 2014 at 4:48 AM** said:

Hi, I think your site may be having browser compatibility issues.
Whenever I look at your site in Safari, it looks fine however, if opening in IE,
it's got some overlapping issues. I just wanted to provide you with a quick heads up!
Other than that, excellent website!

ysl handbags outlet uk

on **February 6, 2014 at 6:54 AM** said:

Thank you.

Glenda Braylock

on **February 6, 2014 at 2:08 PM** said:

Interesting article. It is unfortunate that over the last ten years, the travel industry has already been able to to tackle terrorism, SARS, tsunamis, flu virus, swine flu, along with the first ever true global economic downturn. Through all this the industry has proven to be sturdy, resilient plus dynamic, obtaining new approaches to deal with difficulty. There are constantly fresh troubles and the opportunity to which the sector must once again adapt and behave.

